NATION

7 killed in temple wall collapse in Andhra

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

India sees brisk gold buying on Akshaya Tritiya

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Revitalised Royals look to halt unstoppable MI

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Rajnath to represent India at Russia's Victory Day

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will represent India at Russia's Victory Day parade on 9 May that will mark the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Germany in the Second World War. Russia invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the grand parade to be held in Moscow, but India informed Russia that Singh will attend it. Russia has invited leaders of several friendly nations to attend this year's Victory Day parade. Modi had travelled to Russia twice in 2024 for an annual summit with President Vladimir Putin and to attend the BRICS Summit in Kazan. Putin will visit India for the annual summit this year. *—PTI*

Bangladesh HC gives bail to ISKCON monk

DHAKA, 30 APRIL

The Bangladesh High Court on Wednesday granted bail to Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das, five months after his arrest for allegedly defaming the national flag. The two-judge bench, comprising Justices Atoar Rahman and Ali Reza, declared absolute its earlier rule questioning the denial of bail. Das, a former ISKCON leader and spokesperson for the Sammilito Sanatani Jagaran Jote, was arrested on 25 November 2024 at Dhaka airport. He was accused, along with 18 others, of disrespecting the national flag during an event in Chattogram. A lower court had denied him bail, triggering protests that turned violent — including the fatal stabbing of assistant government prosecutor Saiful Islam Alif. *—PTI*

India to face above-normal temp in May

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday above-normal temperatures for most parts of India in May, but occasional thunderstorms may keep the heat from reaching the severe levels. Heat wave days are likely to occur more than normal in most parts of Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal. Some areas of Gujarat, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, adjoining Telangana and north Karnataka will also witness more heat waves. Normal to above-normal rainfall will occur in most parts of the country, except for some areas in northwest, central and northeast India. Rainfall over north India will be more than 109 per cent of the long-period average of 64.1 mm. *—PTI*

Centre announces caste survey, steals Opposition's thunder

Caste census is a key issue in poll-bound Bihar

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Ahead of Bihar elections, the Centre on Wednesday announced that caste enumeration will be included in the forthcoming nationwide census in a "transparent" manner.

The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, announcing the decision, criticised Opposition-ruled states for conducting "non-transparent" caste surveys for political purposes. He said that while some states such as Bihar, Telangana and Karnataka had undertaken caste-based surveys, these lacked uniformity and created societal confusion.

He noted that caste has not been included in the national census since Independence, barring the enumeration of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The last and only post-independence caste count was the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in 2011. Vaishnaw accused successive Congress governments of opposing caste census and using the issue as a political tool.

The decennial census, originally scheduled for 2020, has been delayed due to the Covd-19 pandemic *PHOTO: PTI*

"We have put enough pressure on the government to get the caste census done and we want a date by when it is done and we want to put pressure on the government to see that the 50 per cent cap is destroyed

—Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

Union Home Minister Amit Shah welcomed the move, calling it a step towards "social equality and empowerment of deprived sections". He accused the Congress of long-standing opposition to caste census and said this decision would enable inclusive development. The announcement comes ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, where caste census has emerged as a key issue. Congress and the INDIA bloc have repeatedly called for nationwide caste data. "Better late than never," said Congress leader Jairam Ramesh. The decennial census, scheduled for 2020, has been delayed due to the Covd-19 pandemic. There is still no official timeline for its rollout. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3 & 5

Pak says India's military will strike in 24 to 36 hrs

ISLAMABAD, 30 APRIL

Pakistan on Wednesday claimed it has "credible intelligence" that India is planning military action within the next 24–36 hours and warned of "assured and decisive" consequences.

The allegation follows a recent high-level security meeting in New Delhi, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi granted India's armed forces "complete operational freedom" to respond to the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 people,. India has accused Pakistan-based groups of involvement in the attack.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the Indian government is "preparing to carry out military action on the basis of baseless and concocted allegations." He added that Pakistan itself is a victim of terrorism and has offered an independent probe by neutral experts — a move India has reportedly declined. Pakistan has also deployed F-16s to guard Islamabad and moved artillery regiments from Sialkot

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated that the risk of conflict is "increasing with the passage of time" despite efforts by other countries to defuse tensions. "If there is a violation by India, we will respond. The nature of the response will be determined by the Indian action," he warned.

Meanwhile, Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reviewed the situation on Wednesday.

In a precautionary measure, Pakistan International Airlines cancelled all flights to and from Gilgit, Skardu, and other parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, citing security concerns.

Airports across the country have been placed on high alert. India has issued a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) restricting its airspace to all aircraft registered, operated, or leased by Pakistan, including commercial airlines and military flights.

Futhermore, the Centre blocked social media accounts of Pakistani artists including actors Mahira Khan, Hania Aamir and Ali Zafar, found their Instagram accounts blocked in India. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2 & 3

A man cries after cops deport his wife to Pakistan, at the Attari-Wagah border checkpost

IN A 1ST, PAK ARMY FIRES ALONG INTERNATIONAL BORDER

The Pakistan Army has opened fire along the Indo-Pak international border in Paragwal sector of Jammu. The Pak Army also fired at Naushera and Sunderbani sectors in Rajouri district, Akhnoor sector in Jammu, Baramulla and Kupwara districts along the Line of Contro (LoC) on 29 April for the sixth consecutive day. Tensions between the two countries escalated following the Pahalgam attack. Indian forces responded with equal measure to the firing. Additional BSF personnel have been deployed along the international border. About 20 Pakistani posts are involved in the cease-fire violations, with Pakistan forces only small arms. Security forces have positioned themselves in Anantnag, Pulwama, and Shopian to ensure security along the border.

Kashmiri vendors assaulted in Mussoorie

MUSSOORIE, 30 APRIL

A video of two Kashmiri shawl vendors in Mussoorie being assaulted by a group of local men has gone viral.

The video that went viral on 29 April, showed three persons slapping the vendors. The attackers also forced them to shut their shops and leave.

Finally one of the victims produced his Aadhar card to establish his identity as being a native of Jammu and Kashmir.

The assaulters have been arrested.

Jammu and Kashmir Students Association said that members of the Bajrang Dal assaulted the two vendors.

16 other Kashmiri traders from the Kupwara district have also been threatened and evicted from their rented homes. *—Agencies*

Tariff talks with India going great, think will have a deal: Trump

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 30 APRIL

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday expressed optimism over ongoing trade negotiations with India, stating that talks are "coming along great" and that he believes the two nations "will have a deal".

Speaking to reporters before departing for a rally in Michigan, Trump referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the White House and said India is keen on reaching a trade agreement.

Earlier in the day, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the two countries are "very close" to finalising a bilateral trade agreement. Highlighting India's high tariff regime, Bessent noted it was "easier to negotiate" with New Delhi, as the barriers were more transparent than those in many other countries.

Bessent also referenced Vice President JD Vance's recent India visit, where "very good progress" was made with PM Modi. Following the visit, both nations finalised the Terms of Reference for the negotiations, paving the way for discussions focused on job creation, citizen well-being, and supply-chain integration.

India's Commerce Department, led by Additional Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, recently held the first in-person talks in Washington. Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said India aims to conclude negotiations swiftly.

The trade agreement, expected by autumn 2025, is intended to boost bilateral trade and support both countries' broader economic visions — 'Amrit Kaal' for India and the 'Golden Age' for the US. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

UKRAINE TO SIGN RARE MINERALS DEAL WITH US

KYIV, 30 APRIL

Ukraine is ready to finalise a rare minerals deal with the US, aiming to secure continued military support in its war with Russia

Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko is en route to Washington to help seal the agreement, which would grant the US access to over 20 critical materials, including titanium, uranium, lithium, and graphite.

The deal, revised to address Kyiv's concerns over US dominance, proposes equal investment over a 10-year period and excludes prior aid from counting toward the US contribution.

The move follows pressure from President Trump, who tied further aid to US access to Ukraine's mineral resources. Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Putin is open to ceasefire talks but wants key issues addressed first. As US pressure mounts for faster negotiations, the UN reported a sharp rise in Ukrainian civilian casualties, with over 2,600 this year.

A Russian drone attack on Kharkiv injured 45 people on Wednesday. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

IN DARKNESS, A MESSAGE

Mosques in Bengaluru go dark on Wednesday during a 'Silent Lights Off' protest against the Waqf Amendment Act 2025, organised by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

14 killed in Kolkata hotel fire

A firefighter carries a cat to safety after rescuing it from the Rituraj Hotel in Kolkata on Wednesday, nearly 16 hours after the fire broke out *PHOTO: PTI*

KOLKATA, 30 APRIL

A massive fire at Hotel Rituraj in Kolkata's congested Mechuapatti area claimed 14 lives and left 13 injured late Tuesday evening. The blaze, which broke out around 7.30PM, trapped many of the 88 guests inside the six-storey building.

Most victims died from suffocation, with a few leaping from upper floors in panic. The deceased included 11 men, a woman, and two children. Ten fire tenders battled the blaze for nearly 10 hours. All 14 bodies have been identified.

Authorities confirmed fire safety violations, including defunct alarms and sprinklers, a blocked staircase, and sealed ventilation points. An illegal dance bar under construction reportedly worsened the situation. The hotel's fire safety clearance had expired in 2022, and the owners are currently absconding.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Rs 2 lakh ex gratia for the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee echoed condolences, ordered a probe, and pledged similar compensation from the state. A Special Investigation Team has been formed. BJP criticised the TMC government for negligence, while TMC's Abhishek Banerjee assured full support to the victims' families. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

'MAKE KYC INCLUSIVE'

SC says digital access a fundamental right

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan held that changes in KYC procedures are essential as individuals with disabilities, including blindness and facial disfigurement, are often unable to perform visual tasks required for KYC – such as head movements or blinking for live photographs – leading to denial of services like opening bank accounts or accessing welfare schemes.

The court observed that such barriers prevent timely access to essential services and rights, and passed 20 directions to make digital KYC processes inclusive.

Pragya Prasun *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Citing constitutional provisions, the bench affirmed the petitioners' right to demand accessible digital services. It called for KYC processes to comply with accessibility codes and ensure appropriate accommodations for the disabled.

Highlighting challenges in rural areas, the court noted the expanding reliance on digital platforms for essential services, making accessibility a constitutional imperative.

"The digital divide continues to exclude persons with disabilities, rural populations, the elderly, economically weaker sections and linguistic minorities," the court said.

It directed that all government portals, learning platforms, and fintech services must be universally accessible and stressed the state's duty to design inclusive digital ecosystems.

The verdict follows a legal challenge by acid attack survivor Pragya Prasun, who was denied a bank account and SIM card as she could not blink for the 'live photo' requirement. Her online campaign, #IWontBlink, highlighted the systemic exclusion faced by disabled individuals. *—PTI*

Maheshwar Rao, who is also BMRCL Chief, takes charge as the new BBMP Commissioner on Wednesday, succeeding Tushar Girinath at BBMP head office in City
PIC: MOHAMMED ASAD

Forest watcher blames senior, kills self in Mysuru

MYSURU, 30 APRIL

A forest department watcher was found dead in an apparent suicide at Saragur town in Mysuru district, with a note left behind alleging harassment by senior officials. The deceased is P Suresh, 34, a resident of Berambadi village in Gundlupet. His decomposed body was discovered on Wednesday at the forest department quarters in Saragur. According to Saragur Town Police, a death note recovered from the scene accuses Assistant Conservator of Forests Amrutha Mayappanavar of workplace harassment. The family of Suresh has also alleged mental harassment by the officer. Based on a complaint filed by Suresh's relatives, police have registered a case. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Ex-Congress leader booked over forging fire safety

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

A case has been registered against former Congress leader Gurappa Naidu and others for allegedly creating a fake no objection certificate (NOC) from the fire safety department on behalf of his school and submitting it before the high court and other institutions. The FIR was registered at the Vidhana Soudha Police Station on charges of cheating and forgery based on a complaint lodged by advocate Sudha Katwa on 29 April. Katwa alleged that the chairman of BGS Bloomfield and trustee Sunitha Naidu had not obtained the required NOC from the fire and safety department, instead submitting a fake one before the high court and the Central Board of Secondary Education. Naidu, who was the general secretary of the Congress' Karnataka unit, was expelled from the party after a case was registered against him on molestation charges in November 2024. *—PTI*

Dharwad gram panchayat member killed at his home

DHARWAD, 30 APRIL

Shankraiah Panchaiah Matapati, a member of the Kottur Gram Panchayat in Dharwad taluk, was found murdered at his residence in Kottur on Tuesday night. Shankraiah, previously booked in a murder case, had recently been released on bail. He was discovered in a pool of blood with multiple stab wounds. According to Dharwad Superintendent of Police Gopal Byakod, Shankraiah sustained around 10 stab injuries and died on the spot due to severe blood loss. He was alone at home when the attack occurred. Upon receiving information, Garag police rushed to the scene and shifted him to the government hospital in Dharwad, where he was declared brought dead. CCTV footage from outside the house showed two unidentified individuals entering the home around 7.30pm and leaving approximately 15 minutes later. Garag police have launched an investigation into the murder. *—Salar News*

CM calls pro-Pak slogans treason after M'luru lynching

Mangaluru lynching victim identified as Wayanad native

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that anyone speaking in favour of Pakistan is wrong and it is treason. He said this on Tuesday amid an investigation into the mob lynching of a man accused of shouting "Pakistan Zindabad" during a cricket match in Mangaluru.

The deceased, Ashraf, was a resident of Pulpalli in Wayanad district, Kerala. According to police, the incident occurred on 27 April near Bhatra Kallurti temple in Kudupu on the outskirts of Mangaluru.

Ashraf was assaulted with sticks after he allegedly shouted the slogan during the match. The attack resulted in multiple injuries, leading to internal bleeding and eventually death.

Home Minister G Parameshwara confirmed that around 20 people have been arrested. "Only those arrested have said the victim shouted the slogan," he said, adding that more individuals, including several who attended the cricket match, are being questioned.

Parameshwara also said Ashraf's identity is being verified, and his family is expected to arrive in Mangaluru for official identification and legal procedures.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah pays tribute to 12th-century philosopher Basavanna on the occasion of Basava Jayanthi, in Bengaluru on Wednesday
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

When asked about reports that police initially attempted to present the case as a suicide, Parameshwara stated: "We have no such information."

State Labour Minister Santosh Lad too said that Congress will not support anyone involved in shouting pro-Pakistan slogans.

"Even if a member of my own family were involved, I would not support them," he said. However, he firmly added that mob lynching is equally unacceptable. "Taking the law into one's own hands is offensive. Such matters must be handled through legal channels," he said.

Lad also expressed concerns over the recurring instances of such sloganeering across the country.
— Salar News with Agencies

CM TO MODI

'Socio-economic report needed with caste census'

BAGALKOT/ BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday urged the Centre to conduct a socio-economic survey in addition to the caste census, stating that the latter alone is insufficient to ensure social justice.

Responding to the Centre's announcement of including caste enumeration in the upcoming national census, Siddaramaiah said, "We had stated in our manifesto that both socio-economic and caste census should be conducted. If we are to deliver social justice, a socio-economic survey is crucial."

He was speaking to reporters in Bagalkot, days after a special Cabinet meeting on the State's own caste census report ended without conclusion.

The report, based on Karnataka's 2015 "Social and Educational Survey" covering 94 per cent of the population, was submitted in February 2024. However, internal differences within Congress have delayed a final decision.

Home Minister G Parameshwara confirmed that the next special Cabinet meeting to discuss the report, initially expected on 2 May, has been postponed with no new date fixed.

He added that the regular cabinet meeting on 9 May will not include the caste census discussion.

Parameshwara acknowledged the controversy, saying some ministers have raised concerns about the survey's accuracy and methodology, with objections from influential communities like the Vokkaligas and Veerashaiva-Lingayats, who have labelled it "unscientific". They are demanding a fresh survey. *—PTI*

Angry over 'affair', 3 kill Bidar couple in front of their child

BIDAR, 30 APRIL

A couple was stabbed to death in front of their two-year-old child near Kohinoor Pahad–Ladwanti Road in Basavakalyan taluk of Bidar district on Tuesday.

The victims, Raju Kolsure, 28, and his wife Sharika Kolsure, 23, were residents of Jaffarwadi village. According to police, the double murder is linked to an alleged extramarital affair involving Raju.

Raju was reportedly in a relationship with a woman named Pallavi, who is said to be the sister of the accused, Dattatreya. Enraged by the affair and the circulation of a photo of the two on social media, Dattatreya, along with his cousin Tukaram and Pallavi's husband Vitthal, allegedly conspired to carry out the attack.

Raju Kolsure and Sharika Kolsure
PHOTO: SALAR

Superintendent of Police Pradeep Gunti told Salar News that Pallavi had lured Raju back to Jaffarwadi from Mumbai through a phone call. Upon his return, Raju and Sharika were ambushed and attacked with sharp weapons near Kohinoor Pahad–Ladwanti Road. Both died on the spot, while their toddler witnessed the murder. Following the incident, the accused surrendered at the local police station. Those arrested are Dattatreya, resident of Yarandagi; Tukaram, resident of Jaffarwadi; and Pallavi, also a resident of Jaffarwadi Manthal Police have registered a case under Sections 103(1), 49, and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. *—Salar News*

ED raids Cong man in medical college stipend scam

KALABURAGI, 30 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday raided the residences of Congress leader Bhimashankar Bilgundi, former principal of Mahadevappa Rampure Medical College (MRMC) Dr SM. Patil, and accountant Subhash Jagannath over alleged misappropriation of Rs 81.21 crore meant for stipends of 282 postgraduate medical students. Bilgundi, a former president of the Hyderabad Karnataka Education Society, is among four accused, including a Canara Bank manager. The complaint, filed on 31 March 2023, alleges that the stipend was transferred to students' accounts and later siphoned off using forged signatures on blank cheques. Over 30 ED officials carried out the raids. *—Salar News*

PM should protect country: Kharge

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

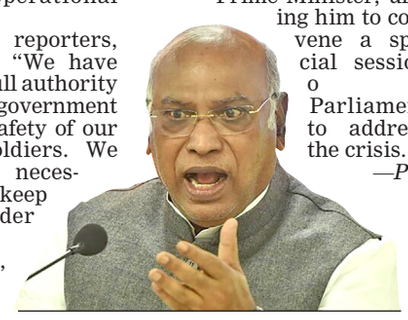
Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday urged Narendra Modi to act decisively following the Pahalgam terror attack, calling on him to understand the public sentiment and use the authority granted by all political parties to take necessary action. Reiterating his demand for a special session of Parliament, Kharge said such a session would show the nation's collective resolve and offer the PM a platform to brief floor leaders—without disclosing sensitive operational details.

Speaking to reporters, Kharge stated, "We have already given full authority to the central government to ensure the safety of our people and soldiers. We support every necessary step to keep Pakistan under control."

He added, "The Prime Minister must understand the mood of the nation and act swiftly to protect the country."

Addressing the controversy around the Congress's 'Gayab' (missing) post on social media, which depicted a silhouette of Modi with the message "missing during responsibility," Kharge distanced himself, saying he hadn't seen it. However, he stressed, "No one—be it the Prime Minister or any leader—should be disrespected. It's not right, whether it's done by BJP or our own."

Kharge and Rahul Gandhi have already written to the Prime Minister, urging him to convene a special session of Parliament to address the crisis. *—PTI*



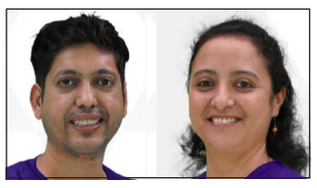
Mysuru CEO shoots wife & teen son at US home, then kills self

NEW YORK, 30 APRIL

A Mysuru-based tech entrepreneur died by suicide and his wife and son were found shot dead at their Newcastle residence near Washington in the United States on 24 April, according to several reports.

The deceased are Harshavardhana S Kikkeri, 57, his wife Shwetha Panyam, 44, and their 14-year-old son Dhruva Kikkeri. The couple's younger son survived the incident.

According to the King County Sheriff's Office, deputies responded to a 911 call and discovered three bodies at the family's townhouse on 129th Street SE. The medical examiner ruled Shwetha and Dhruva's deaths as homicides, while Harshavardhana died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, classified as suicide.



Harshavardhana Kikkeri and his wife Shwetha Panyam
PHOTO: HOLOWORLD.ONE

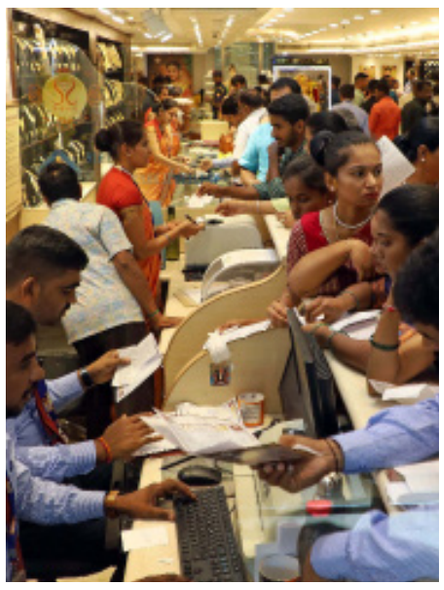
The motive behind the killings remains unknown. Neighbours described the family as quiet and close-knit, expressing shock over the tragedy.

Originally from Kikkeri village in Mandya district, Karnataka, Harshavardhana was a graduate of Sri Jayachamarajendra College of Engineering, Mysuru, and had previously worked at Microsoft in the US, focusing on robotics.

In 2017, he and Shwetha co-founded HoloWorld, an India-based AI and robotics company headquartered in Mysuru, where he served as CEO and CTO and she as president. The company operated until it shut down in 2022.

Authorities continue to investigate the circumstances leading to the deaths. "Detectives are working diligently to piece together what led to this tragedy," said Sheriff's Office spokesperson Brandyn Hull. *—Salar News*

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS GOLD



People shop for jewellery on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya at Shree Sai Gold Palace in Basavanagudi, Bengaluru, on Wednesday.
PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGE

HC stays ED case against Amnesty India

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

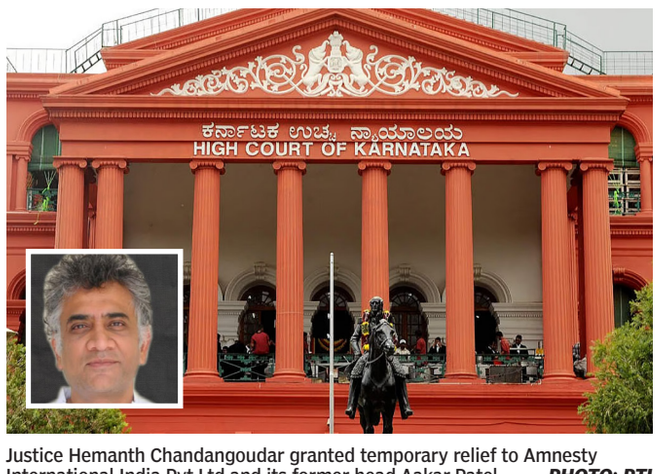
High Court issued an interim stay on the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) money laundering proceedings against Amnesty International India Pvt Ltd (AIIPL) and its former head, Aakar Patel.

The case stems from a 2022 prosecution complaint.

Justice Hemanth Chandangoudar granted temporary relief to both the AIIPL and Patel, instructing the ED to refrain from probing under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The court also served a notice to the ED, telling it to respond to the two petitions seeking to quash the case.

The ED filed a complaint in May 2022 against several individuals, including Patel, AIIPL, and former CEO G Ananthapadmanabhan, based on alleged violations of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and linked money laundering activities. The case goes back to a 2019 FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against Amnesty International India Foundation Trust (AIIFT), which accused the organisation of breaching FCRA norms. The ED later took over, claiming that Amnesty received funds from its UK counterpart allegedly to bypass FCRA restrictions.



Justice Hemanth Chandangoudar granted temporary relief to Amnesty International India Pvt Ltd and its former head Aakar Patel
PHOTO: PTI

Amnesty India ceased operations in 2020 after its bank accounts were frozen. The organisation described the action as part of a broader clampdown on civil society and maintained that the allegations were unfounded.

Since the charges against Patel and AIIPL aligned with those in the previous case, the court found it appropriate to extend the same protection *—PTI*

MYSURU TO HOST 2-DAY JACKFRUIT FESTIVAL FROM 3 MAY

MYSURU, 30 APRIL

The annual two-day Jackfruit Festival, organised by Sahaja Samrudha in collaboration with Amul Organic and Rich Plus, will be held on 3 and 4 May at Nanjaraja Bahadur Choultry in Mysuru.

The festival will showcase the rich diversity of jackfruit, including rare red, white, and yellow-fleshed varieties from across Karnataka, known for their unique taste, texture, and shape. Highlights include a jackfruit food bazaar featuring innovative value-added products such as jackfruit ice cream, jams, squashes, papads, halwa, kebabs, holige, and dosa. Cooking demonstrations will spotlight traditional and modern jackfruit recipes.

A seedling display and sale will offer over 25 varieties of jackfruit, including Rudrakshi Halasu, Siddu, Shankara, Tubagere Halasu, Vietnam Super Early, and the rare Chandra Halasu. Over 50 farmer groups from HD Kote, Periyapatna, Kollegal, Srirangapatna, Tiptur, , and Haveri will participate, showcasing organic produce, millets, pulses, desi rice, cold-pressed oils, and Bilwa (stone apple) juice and saplings.

Competitions include a jackfruit eating contest on 4 May, and jackfruit lifting and weight-guessing contests across both days. *—Salar News*

Transgenders over 60 in UP to get old-age homes

LUCKNOW, 30 APRIL

Uttar Pradesh government Wednesday said it has decided to extend old-age home facilities to transgender individuals above age of 60, a statement said. These elderly members of the transgender community will not only receive shelter but will also be ensured a dignified and secure life. They will be provided with pension, Ayushman Bharat health cards, routine health check-ups, nutritious food and mental health counselling, the government said. To ensure safety and quick resolution of issues, the state government has established Transgender Protection Cells in every district. These cells operate under the supervision of the respective District Magistrate, ensuring transparency and accountability, it added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Cong's Sharmila claims she's under house arrest

VIJAYAWADA, 30 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) President YS Sharmila said on Wednesday that she was placed under house arrest by the state government and questioned Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu about the reason for it. The Congress leader said she has been confined in her villa in Vijayawada. Sharmila asked CM Naidu to tell the people of AP why she was placed under house arrest. "AP CM garu, why am I house arrested in my villa in Vijayawada? For what reason? Please tell the people of AP," said Sharmila in a post on X. Questioning if going to her workplace, the Congress office, is a crime, she asked, "Why are you trying to curtail our constitutional rights? What is your govt afraid of?". *—PTI*

Jarange to hold hunger strike over Maratha quota

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 30 APRIL

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange on Wednesday announced to launch a hunger strike on 29 August to press for his community's demand for draft notification on "blood relatives" of Kunbi Marathas into a law. Speaking at his native Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district, he set the deadline of 6 June before the state government, saying if it fails to fulfil it, the community will go ahead with the hunger strike plan in Mumbai. He said the Maratha community was patiently waiting for the fulfilment of demands. Led by Jarange, the Maratha community has been demanding the issuance of Kunbi certificates to Marathas, enabling them to get inclusion in the OBC category for reservation in government jobs and education. *—PTI*

21 Manipur MLAs ask Shah to form 'popular govt'

IMPHAL, 30 APRIL

Twenty-one Manipur MLAs have written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging him to form a "popular government" in the northeastern state, which is now under the President's rule, to ensure peace and normalcy. The Centre had on 13 February imposed the President's rule in Manipur, where more than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. The letter, which is signed by 13 BJP MLAs, 3 NPP legislators, 3 Naga Peoples' Front MLAs and two independent members of the assembly. The letter was received by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 29 April and made public on Wednesday, one of the legislators said. *—PTI*

US and UK call for calm over Pahalgam tensions

Marco Rubio to speak to India and Pakistan foreign ministers

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON/LONDON 30 APRIL

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and UK Foreign Office Minister Hamish Falconer Hamish Falconer PHOTO: ANI

Amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan, the US has called on both countries "not to escalate" the conflict. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will speak to their foreign ministers "as early as today or tomorrow".

US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce at a press briefing on Tuesday said that Washington is reaching out to both India and Pakistan "regarding the Kashmir situation" and telling "them not to escalate the situation."

Secretary of State Rubio "expects to speak with the foreign ministers of Pakistan and India as early as today or tomorrow. He is encouraging other national leaders and foreign ministers to reach out to the countries on this issue," Bruce said.

Meanwhile, UK also called for de-escalation with Foreign Office Minister Hamish Falconer "calling for a calm". Responding to an "Urgent Question" tabled in the House of Commons, Falconer said, "We call on all sides, all community leaders and all involved to call for calm at a time of tension in the region."

"We take seriously our responsibility for the security of all embassies and High Commissions under the Vienna Convention, so both the Pakistani and Indian High Commissions will receive all the support of the UK state to ensure that they stay safe", he said.

"We want to see the perpetrators held to justice properly, and we will be supporting India to do so," Falconer said. "We are playing our role to try to ensure that tensions do not escalate. We are friends to them both". *—PTI*

'ARE YOU HINDU?'

Man says suspect spoke to him day before attack

JALNA, 30 APRIL

A young man from Jalna city in Maharashtra, who recently returned from Kashmir, claimed that one of the suspected attackers in the Pahalgam terror case spoke to him a day before the carnage.

"Hindu ho kya. You don't look like you are from Kashmir," Adarsh Raut said, recalling his interaction with a man at a food stall in the Baisaran Valley on 21 April.

According to Raut, he had gone horse riding in Pahalgam on 21 April and had stopped at a "Maggi stall" for food when a man approached him and asked him if he was a Hindu.

"The suspect then turned to his companion and said, 'There's less crowd today," Raut claimed.

The Jalna resident said he found the conversation a bit disturbing but did not grasp the full implication of it until the following day.

"After I saw the sketches released by the NIA (National Investigation Agency), I connected the dots," he claimed.

Raut said he has emailed the NIA a detailed account of his experience in Kashmir.

"I have written everything I could remember. I have also mentioned that I could not initially pay the Maggi stall owner due to network issues. I took his phone number and paid him once I came down from the hill," he said. *—PTI*

India warns Pak against unprovoked firing on LoC

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

- During a 'routine' phone conversation between DGMOs of both sides, India gave Pakistan a stern warning against firing across the LoC which began on Friday

India has warned Pakistan against its unprovoked firings along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir as the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two armies spoke on the hotline amid the escalating tensions.

Pakistan has been resorting to firings on the Indian side of the LoC since Friday night in violation of a ceasefire understanding and the Indian Army responded to them "appropriately", according to Indian military sources.

The conversation came as India mulls its options to respond to the Pahalgam attack.

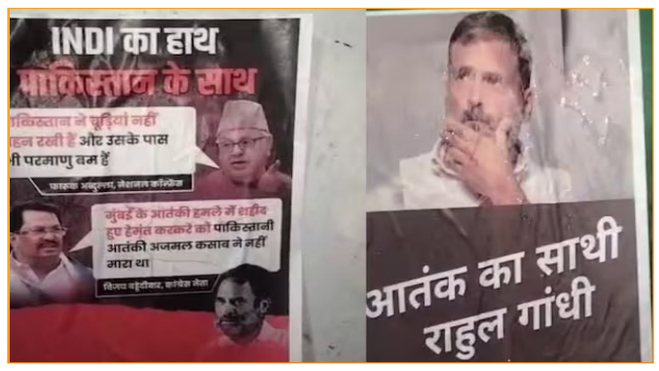
The Pakistan military has been warned against the unprovoked firings, sources said.

The sources, however, described the exchanges over the hotline as "routine", saying it was a weekly conversation between the DGMOs, held every Tuesday. The Indian DGMO strongly took up the matter of ceasefire violations by the Pakistan military, the sources said. *—PTI*

STIRRING THE POT

Posters call RaGa 'supporter of terror' ahead of Amethi visit

AMETHI, 30 APRIL



The posters were put up ahead of Rahul Gandhi's scheduled visit to the Amethi PHOTO: PTI

Just hours before Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit to Amethi on Wednesday, posters branding him as a "supporter of terror" appeared at several locations across the city, including near the Congress office.

The provocative posters stirred political tensions, even as police had been deployed in strength to prevent such incidents.

According to official, police had been on alert to prevent the circulation of such material, but their efforts fell short. The identity of those behind the act remains unknown.

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, on Tuesday reached his parliamentary constituency Raebareli for a visit. *—PTI*

NSAB revamped; ex-RAW as chief

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The government revamped the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) by appointing six new members and tasking former RAW and National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) chief Alok Joshi to helm it as the chairman.

The NSAB is a 15-member advisory body that provides inputs to the National Security Council Secretariat.

The new members of the NSAB are former Western Air Commander Air Marshal PM Sinha, former Southern Army Commander Lt Gen AK Singh, former diplomat B Venkatesh Varma and Rear Admiral (retd) Monty Khanna, sources said. Retired IPS officers Rajiv Ranjan Verma and Manmohan Singh were also appointed. *—PTI*

Case against Sisodia, Jain for 2K cr classroom 'scam'

Former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and former health minister Satyendra Jain PHOTO: PTI

- The Anti-Corruption Branch claimed the Rs 2,000 crore scam involved awarding contracts at highly-inflated rates with classrooms built at Rs 24.86 lakh each

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The Delhi government's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) has filed a case against AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain over alleged corruption in the construction of 12,748 classrooms.

The Rs 2,000 crore scam involved awarding contracts at highly-inflated rates with classrooms in government schools built at Rs 24.86 lakh each, nearly five times the usual cost.

The project was awarded to 34 contractors linked with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) when Sisodia was the education minister and Jain the PWD minister.

AAP said the case against its leaders was registered to "pressure and scare" them for their recent appointment as in-charge and co-incharge of the Punjab party unit.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva demanded that the ACB investigate Arvind Kejriwal's role in the alleged scam.

The project was also not completed within the stipulated period ending Jun e 2016.

Complaints regarding the alleged scam were received from BJP leaders.

The consultant and architect too were appointed without following due process.

The initial tendered amount was Rs 860.63 crore, which later saw an escalation of 17 per cent to 90 per cent amounting to Rs 326.25 crore.

No fresh tenders were invited to reflect these changes, contrary to CVC guidelines.

Investigations are underway to unearth the whole conspiracy and fix the role and culpability of the AAP leaders, unknown government officials and contractors. *—PTI*

CM SHOULD REMOVE AURANGZEB'S TOMB IN M'RASHTRA: SEER

NAGPUR, 30 APRIL

Hindu seer Pragyananand Saraswati Maharaj said the "first duty" of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was to remove the tombs of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and other invaders.

The Shakaracharya (head) of the Dwarka Sharda Jyotish Peeth said that if the government fails to do so, then the followers of Sanatan Dharma will have to take it upon themselves to do so.

Speaking to Marathi news channel ABP Majha in Nagpur on Tuesday, he said, "You gave land to Aurangzeb, whose descendants today - as fundamentalists and extremists - are attacking Hindus. I have said it earlier and saying it again that the first responsibility of Devendra Fadnavis is to remove and finish the graves of Aurangzeb and other invaders from Maharashtra."

"If the government does not do it, then the 'Sanatan Dharma' will have to come forward to do this work," Maharaj said.

Tension flared in parts of Maharashtra last month, including riots in Nagpur, over the issue. *—PTI*

CLEANING HOUSE?

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee presents a golden broom to the priests at the newly inaugurated Jagannath Temple in Digha. As per tradition, the path taken by Lord Jagannath during the Rath Yatra is ceremonially swept with a golden broom PHOTO: PTI

MODI'S MASTERSTROKE?

Opposition takes credit for caste census

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

- Opposition leaders, like RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, Congress President Malikarjun Kharge and CPI(M) head MA Baby hailed the decision but said setting a timeline for the census is imperative

As the Centre announced the inclusion of caste enumeration in the next census on Wednesday, Opposition parties said it is a victory for their long-standing demand and the BJP has been compelled to bow to the will of the majority.

"Better late than never," Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, while former Bihar chief minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav said socialists have been advocating it for the last 30 years.

"Those who called us casteists for demanding a caste-based census have received a fitting reply. There is still much left to do. We will keep making these Sanghis dance to our agenda," Yadav said on X.

Ramesh also shared a 16 April, 2023 letter Kharge wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in which he demanded the decennial census and a comprehensive caste census to be included in it.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that had been shying away from implementing this policy and had "falsely accused the Opposition of dividing society".

He demanded that the government allocate funds to initiate the caste census with "complete transparency".

Communist Party of India (Marxist) MP John Brittas claimed the government has done a "volte-face" in view of the upcoming Bihar elections.

"Welcome the caste census though it is a reversal looking at the Bihar elections. The PM had said he only recognised four castes -- the poor, youth, women, and farmers! This volte-face is ok but this nation has been denied of the census which was due in 2021!" he said.

CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby welcomed the decision but stressed that it should be completed in a time-bound fashion. "Wholeheartedly welcome the CCPA's decision to conduct caste enumeration as part of the decadal census. However, the failure to declare its timing is regretted," he said. *—PTI*

Modi on 3-state tour for next two days

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Narendra Modi PHOTO: PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be three states tour - Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala- over the next two days. He will also address audiences at the events in all three states.

Modi will inaugurate the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in Mumbai on Thursday and Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport in Kerala on Friday.

He will also lay the foundation stone of and inaugurate multiple development projects worth over Rs 58,000 crore in Amaravati on 2 May.

The four-day WAVES is positioned as a global hub for media, entertainment, and digital innovation.

Kerala's seaport worth Rs 8,900 crore in is the country's first dedicated container transhipment port.

The strategically important Vizhinjam Port will contribute to strengthening India's position in global trade and reduce reliance on foreign ports for cargo transhipment, the statement said.

Modi will inaugurate seven National Highway projects in Andhra Pradesh.

Among other projects, he will also lay the foundation stone of a missile test range at Nagayalanka in Andhra Pradesh worth around Rs 1,460 crore. *—PTI*

Screams echo as fire guts Kolkata hotel

Guests jump off building to escape flames; Many collapse by the time the fire tenders arrive

KOLKATA, 30 APRIL

The faint smell of something burning was the only warning before chaos broke out in Kolkata's Burrabazar area on Tuesday. A raging fire turned a six-storey low-budget hotel into a furnace of panic and death.

By Wednesday dawn, the air in Mechhuapatti reeked of soot and grief.

Panicked guests' desperate screams echoed down the alley as the fire tore through the building, where 88 people were resided in 42 rooms.

The fire began around 8pm on Tuesday, reportedly on the second floor.

"I saw a boy shouting from the third-floor window," said a shopkeeper. "The smoke swallowed him before anyone could do anything."

"People were banging on windows, some were throwing clothes out. Then I saw one man jump. He hit the ground and didn't get up," said a fruit vendor.

Firefighters arrived with 10 engines, ladders and ropes, but the flames turned the old structure into a "gas chamber".

"We had to break windows to let the smoke out," said a fire department officer. "By the time we reached the upper floors, many had already collapsed."

A Murshidabad garment trader said he woke up to thick smoke under his door.

"I wrapped a towel around my face and crawled. The corridor was pitch black. People were stumbling, crying," he said. "I knocked on my neighbour's door, no answer. I don't think he made it."

A Special Investigation Team was formed. However, preliminary suspicion points to a short circuit, but questions loom large about the hotel's safety compliance. Many of the victims were migrant workers or traders.

"Whether the fire alarm or extinguishers were working, we are looking into everything," said a senior fire officer. As the flames died out, so did the lives of 14 people caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. *—PTI*

Flames rise after a fire broke out at a hotel in Kolkata, Tuesday night; Firefighters help a woman climb down a ladder to escape the hotel **PHOTOS: PTI**

Odisha govt hikes daily wage by just Rs 10

BHUBANESWAR, 30 APRIL

The Odisha government has raised the minimum daily wages of workers by Rs 10, effective from April 1. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi approved a proposal for the daily wage hike on 29 April and the decision will benefit lakhs of workers in the state. The minimum daily wage for unskilled workers has been increased from Rs 452 to Rs 462 and from Rs 502 to Rs 512 for semi-skilled workers. Skilled workers will get Rs 562, instead of Rs 552, and the minimum wage for highly-skilled labourers will be Rs 612 from Rs 602 earlier. The revision will come into effect from April 1, the chief minister's office stated. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

MP farmers who burn stubble to lose financial aid

BHOPAL, 30 APRIL

The Madhya Pradesh cabinet will suspend for a year the financial assistance provided under the Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, of those farmers involved in stubble burning. The produce of such farmers will not be purchased as per the minimum support price (MSP) for one year. The MP government provides Rs 12,000 per year as KisanSamman Nidhi to farmers – Rs 6,000 under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana and an equal amount from the state government. "The state government doesn't want to penalise farmers. They should not cause big losses for small gains. Their children will also suffer if the environment is impacted," Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said. *—PTI*

Delhi teen dies after jumping from police vehicle

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

A 19-year-old boy died while another sustained injuries when they allegedly jumped out of a moving police vehicle during transit in the Vasant Kunj North area of Delhi's southwest, an official said on Wednesday. Family members of the duo blocked the Samalkha-Kapashera road and pelted stones at police, alleging custodial death. Police have initiated legal proceedings and a judicial inquiry is underway into the man's death. According to a police statement, the incident occurred near Vasant Kunj North police station while the duo was being taken to the police station, following their arrest in an arms and vehicle theft case on Tuesday. The arrested individuals were identified as Vikas, 28, and Ravi Sahni, 19, both residents of Samalkha in Delhi. *—PTI*

Rescue operation underway after a rain-soaked wall collapsed at Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

7 killed as Andhra temple wall collapses

VISAKHAPATNAM, 30 APRIL

- The government said the wall collapsed on the Rs 300 ticket queue line near the shopping complex on the ghat road from Simhagiri bus stand at around 3am

Seven people were killed when a rain-soaked wall collapsed at the Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple in Andhra Pradesh's Simhachalam.

According to government sources, one person sustained injuries.

The government said the wall collapsed on the Rs 300 ticket queue line near the shopping complex on the ghat road from Simhagiri bus stand at around 3am.

State Home Minister V Anitha, who was present at the site, said preliminary reports indicated that the wall collapse was triggered by soil loosening due to heavy rains in the area. Anitha said there was no negligence from temple authorities. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Andhra Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, among others, expressed grief over the incident. Both the Centre and the state government announced ex-gratia to the families of those killed.

Naidu announced an ex-gratia of Rs 25 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and Rs 3 lakh each to the injured, an official release said. An outsourcing job in temples under the Endowments Department will be provided to a family member of each victim.

He also ordered an inquiry into the incident by a three-member committee.

Modi announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from PMNRF to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured.

The shrine is dedicated to Lord Narasimha Swamy, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The deity's idol is covered with sandalwood all through the year and revealed only once a year which is celebrated as Chandanotsavam. *—PTI*

SC relief for Kerala CM's aide in DA case

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed an order directing the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) to file an FIR and start probe against the chief principal secretary of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in a disproportionate assets case.

The bench issued notice to the CBI, Kerala government and the complainant on an appeal filed by KM Abraham, a retired IAS officer and the CM's chief principal secretary.

KM Abraham **PHOTO: PTI**

Senior advocate R Basant, appearing for Abraham, submitted an FIR under the Prevention of Corruption Act cannot be registered without mandatory sanction under Section 17A of the law.

The Kerala High Court on 11 April had ordered the CBI probe against Abraham on the plea filed by activist Jomon Puthenpurackal.

The high court had observed a careful analysis of the preliminary inquiry report, other materials and Abraham's defence "prima facie indicated he possessed "movable and immovable properties disproportionate to his known sources of income".

The high court had set aside a 2017 order of the enquiry commissioner-cum-special judge in Thiruvananthapuram, who rejected the petitioner's complaint against Abraham.

The petitioner alleged Abraham, during service, acquired an apartment worth Rs 3 crore in Mumbai, another apartment worth Rs 1 crore at Thiruvananthapuram and constructed a three-storey shopping complex at Kadappakkada in Kollam worth Rs 8 crore. Abraham denied all allegations. *—PTI*

Courts can modify arbitral awards

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Wednesday held courts could modify arbitral awards. In a 4:1 majority ruling, Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justices BR Gavai, Sanjay Kumar and Augustine George Masih held under certain circumstances, the arbitral awards could be modified by using provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. The verdict will impact domestic and international arbitral awards in commercial disputes. Pronouncing the judgement, the CJI, however, ordered courts to exercise "caution" in modifying arbitral awards. *—PTI*

SC backs convict's plea to see mom

"Will you take responsibility if something happens to mother of Vikas Yadav," the Supreme Court asked the Delhi government on Wednesday while hearing an interim bail plea of the Nitish Katara murder case convict. Yadav is who serving a 25-year jail term in the 2002 murder case, is seeking interim bail to attend his ailing mother. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said, "this is not done. This man (Yadav) has undergone 23 years in jail. Are we not empowered to grant temporary bail keeping in mind condition of his mother? What is the fault of mother?" *—PTI*

Champak magazine sues BCCI over name of IPL robot pet dog

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the Board of Control for Cricket in India's response on a plea by renowned children's magazine Champak that alleged trademark infringement over the IPL naming its AI robot dog 'Champak'.

Justice Saurabh Banerjee observed that Champak had been an existing brand name since eternity and asked the BCCI to file its written statement in response to the plea within four weeks. The court listed the matter for further hearing on 9 July.

The plea has been filed by Delhi Press Patra Prakashan Pvt Ltd which has been publishing 'Champak' magazine since 1968. Advocate Amit Gupta, representing the publisher, said naming the robotic dog 'Champak' amounted to infringement of its registered trademark and also commercial exploitation as Champak was a well-known mark. *—PTI*

BCCI said Champak was the name of a flower and people associated the robotic dog with a character of a TV series **PHOTO: PTI**

NON-BAILABLE WARRANT ISSUED AGAINST CHOKSI

MUMBAI, 30 APRIL

A Mumbai court here has issued a non-bailable warrant against diamantaire Mehul Choksi in the Canara Bank-led consortium loan fraud case of Rs 55 crore.

The non-bailable warrant was issued by Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (Esplanade Court) RB Thakur.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are prime accused in the Rs 13,500-crore Punjab National Bank) 'fraud.' Choski was arrested in Belgium on 12 April following an extradition request by Indian probe agencies. He is fighting for bail.

Nirav Modi is in London jail since 2019. Case has been adjourned to 2 June. *—PTI*

5th accused held in Bhopal students' gangrape

BHOPAL, 29 APRIL

Police on Tuesday arrested the fifth accused in connection with the alleged rape and blackmailing of some female students of a college in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal, a senior official said. One more victim also came forward to file a complaint in connection with the incident, based on which a case was registered and investigation was being conducted, he said. "Today, one more accused has been arrested. One more victim has come forward and lodged a complaint," police Commissioner Harinarayanchari Mishra said. The complaint says the accused raped the girls and blackmailed them by making videos. Four accused, including main accused Farhan Ali, have been arrested so far. The city police registered the case on 25 April. Taking suo motu cognisance of the case, National Commission for Women constituted a three-member inquiry committee. *—PTI*

GASPING FOR BREATHE

Gurugram landfill fire doused but toxic fumes fill sky

GURUGRAM, 30 APRIL

A fire that broke out at Bandhwari landfill site in Gurugram two days ago was doused, but the locals are grappling with toxic fumes that have filled the air.

A resident said the repeated fires in the garbage mountain make them gasp for air.

According to officials, over 25 fire tenders were deployed and it took firefighters 16 hours to douse the blaze.

However, it was not a lone incident. In 2024, more than 70 fire incidents were reported in Bandhwadi landfill between March and June.

Methane gas builds up under garbage in landfills due to the decomposition of organic waste in the absence of oxygen. When it comes in contact with air, it catches fire immediately, according to a Municipal Corporation Gurugram official.

Smoke billows after a fire broke out at Bandhwari landfill, in Gurugram **PHOTO: PTI**

An official said that the investigation revealed that the forest fire in the Aravallis forest area nearby caused the recent blaze. Meanwhile, environmentalists demanded a special force to protect Aravallis.

The Forest Department had announced that a special force would be formed that would patrol the protected Aravallis and curb illegal encroachments, illegal mining and tree felling etc. But the project has long been shelved. *—PTI*

IAS OFFICER WITH 57 POSTINGS IN 34 YEARS RETIRES

CHANDIGARH, 30 APRIL

Senior IAS officer Ashok Khemka, known for his uprightness during his 34-year career, which saw 57 postings, retired on Wednesday.

The 1991-batch officer will retire as Additional Chief Secretary, Transport Department. He was transferred and posted to his current job in December 2024.

The Haryana-cadre IAS officer came to limelight in 2012 when he cancelled the mutation of a Gurugram land deal linked to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law, Robert Vadra. A mutation is part of the process to transfer land ownership.

Born in Kolkata on 30 April, 1965, he earned a Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science and Engineering from IIT Kharagpur in 1988, followed by a PhD in Computer Science from Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. *—PTI*

Girls outshine boys in ICSE & ISC results

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Girls outshone boys yet again in the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) class 10 and 12 results declared on Wednesday.

In class 10 exams, the pass percentage of girls stood at 99.45 per cent while that of boys was marginally lower at 98.64 per cent.

Similarly, girls performed better than boys in class 12 too, with girls' pass percentage at 99.45 per cent and boys' pass percentage at 98.64 per cent.

The ICSE examination (Class 10) was conducted in 67 written subjects, of which 20 were Indian languages and 14 were foreign languages and 1 was a classical language.

The ISC examination (Class 12) was conducted in 47 written subjects, 12 of them Indian languages, four foreign languages and two classical languages.

"Candidates and stakeholders can check the results using the CISCE website or the CAREERS portal of the board. The results can also be accessed through Digilocker," chief executive Joseph Emmanuel said. The improvement exams for Class 10 and Class 12 will be conducted in July. *—PTI*

ENDANGERED TURTLE BACK IN THE GANGA

Believed to be on the brink of extinction in north India, the Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle has been reintroduced into the Ganga river through a carefully planned scientific rehabilitation effort, after 30 years. In a post on X on Wednesday, Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil said, 20 such turtles were released in Uttar Pradesh's Haiderpur Wetland. Each turtle is fitted with tracking devices so that their patterns and progress in adapting to the environment can be monitored.

PHOTO: – X @CRPAATIL

From emperors to equality: The journey of caste in India

Caste enumeration in India dates back to the colonial period. Between 1881 and 1931, the British administration included caste as a category in every decennial census. ***PHOTO: PTI***

India is preparing for a landmark policy shift—after more than seventy years of resistance, the central government has announced its intention to include caste enumeration in the next nationwide census. This decision follows decades of political debate, state-level initiatives, and increasing demands for a clearer picture of caste-based disparities in the country.

A caste census involves the systematic collection of data regarding the caste identities of individuals during a national census. In India, where caste has historically shaped access to resources, power, and opportunity, such data can provide essential insights into the demographic distribution and socio-economic conditions of various caste groups.

Proponents argue that a caste census is crucial for designing more targeted affirmative action policies and social justice programmes. It can also help assess the effectiveness of existing reservation systems and ensure fair representation in public institutions.

Caste enumeration in India dates back to the colonial period. Between 1881 and 1931, the British administration included caste as a category in every decennial census. These exercises were motivated by the colonial government's interest in understanding the intricacies of Indian society, which they saw as a tool for more effective governance. The resulting data, though often criticised for its inaccuracies, provided detailed information on the caste, religion, and occupations of the Indian population.

However, post-independence India adopted a very different approach. In 1951, during the first census after independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's government decided to drop general caste enumeration, retaining only data collection on Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The rationale was to avoid reinforcing caste divisions at a time when the focus was on national unity and democratic development.

Caste returned to the political spotlight in the 1980s with the Mandal Commission. Set up to identify socially and educationally backward classes, the commission recommended 27 per cent reservations in central government jobs for OBCs. Its implementation in 1990 triggered widespread protests and political upheaval. Crucially, it also underscored the absence of accurate caste data, which made it difficult to assess the true scale of disadvantage among OBCs.

In recent years, several states have taken matters into their own hands. Bihar, Karnataka, and Telangana have conducted state-level caste surveys to inform local policies. Bihar's survey in 2023 revealed that OBCs and Extremely accounted for more than 63 per cent of the state's population. These figures have reignited calls for a national caste census to ensure similar data is available across the country.

A caste census is not just a data-gathering exercise; it has far-reaching social and political implications. Accurate caste data can help refine reservation policies and ensure that benefits are directed toward genuinely marginalised communities.

Activists and researchers argue that without a clear understanding of caste-based disparities, policies on education, employment, health, and welfare risk being ineffective or exclusionary. As Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of the Population Foundation of India, explained, "Much of access to essential services in India—education, healthcare, nutrition, and social protection—is shaped by structural inequalities of caste, region, religion, and economic status. A caste census is critical to uncover these intersectional disparities and to design policies that are truly equitable."

However, critics caution that the exercise could also entrench caste identities further and fuel social divisions. Concerns about the potential misuse of data for vote-bank politics and communal polarisation persist.

The government's decision to conduct a caste census represents a significant policy shift after more than seven decades. Yet several questions remain unanswered—when will the enumeration take place? How will caste categories be standardised across regions?

While no official date has been announced, the inclusion of caste in the next census has the potential to reshape Indian governance, policy-making, and political strategy in profound ways. If executed transparently and responsibly, it could mark a new chapter in India's quest for social justice

—PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR ساڵار

Ukraine couple found first love, and then war came...

They met in a park on a winter's day in Kyiv. The teenage girl was a manicurist. The boy delivered food. Like their battered country, they had larger dreams. A doctor, an engineer.

But first, marriage. Danylo Khudia, 17, told Alyona Zavadska's mother he planned to propose to her 16-year-old daughter this summer as a surprise on her birthday. They wanted to tie the knot when she turned 18.

The intensity of their connection baffled their parents, but they came around.

"We knew that they are just kids, but we could see they could handle themselves," said Zavadska's mother, Oksana.

As Ukraine's war with Russia roiled around them, Khudia told Zavadska he felt calm and peaceful around her. He called her "my baby girl." She called him "my boy."

A close friend of Khudia's, Danylo Bondarchuck, recalled how his eyes shone the first time he mentioned Alyona. "I have the most beautiful girlfriend," he said.

The couple were inseparable. Zavadska cheered Khudia in his basketball games and encouraged him as he pursued his driver's license. She helped him study for exams and consoled him when he mentioned being cheated in a money-making scam.

When Zavadska expressed interest in tattoo art, Khudia agreed to be her guinea pig. She tattooed him with an alien, a scorpion, a design of the moon.

Zavadska opened up, too. She told Khudia she had an eating disorder. He helped her overcome it.

"She didn't believe she was beautiful," her mother said. "He made her believe she is."

In recent weeks, as the US pressed for peace talks, the couple found an apartment a few blocks from Zavadska's parents. They opened a bank account and prepared to build a life.

But they could never hide from war.

Six months ago, Zavadska had dreamed Khudia's house would be destroyed in a missile strike. It was eerie, but she thought no more of it.

On Thursday night, Zavadska had a terrible feeling but couldn't explain why. She hugged Khudia tight for 10 minutes and told him to update her every hour until he went to sleep.

Air sirens blared at 1 am, and she texted him to ask if everything was OK. There was no reply. She waited out the alert in a nearby basement.

In the morning, Khudia's best friend called. Khudia's house had been hit by a Russian missile. His remains had been found. He had died instantly. His parents were also killed. His sister was pulled from the rubble alive.

There were no obvious military targets in the neighbourhood. A military registration and enlistment office was nearby but typically empty at night. Top-secret weapons production facilities and other targets are known to be in various parts of Kyiv, and Russian missiles are rarely precise.

The attack killed 13 people and brought a rare reproach from US President Donald Trump, who urged Russian President Vladimir Putin "to stop shooting, sit down and sign a deal."

On Monday, Zavadska said goodbye.

She knelt before Khudia's coffin, shaking with grief, until mourners urged her away. Her mother supported her slender frame. Loved ones piled flowers on the closed casket until they overflowed.

"He was the most precious thing I have ever had," Zavadska said.

The couple's families met for the first time at the funeral. Khudia's grandmother saw the girl, her fingers pressed against the boy's portrait, and knew.

"You are Alyona? Aren't you?" she called out.

Khudia has appeared in Zavadska's dreams since the day after he was killed, weeping by her feet. Sleep eludes her, her mother said: "She is terrified of it."

In a park gazebo where the couple liked to sit together, Zavadska looked at photos. In one, the couple is kissing, Zavadska's long, glossy hair obscuring Khudia's face.

She now speaks in a whisper barely audible above the rustling of leaves. She says part of her is gone. Her mother, feeling powerless, worries her daughter won't survive her grief. "His hugs were so warm," Zavadska said. "We were waiting for the summer so much. We had so many plans." *—PTI*

As Ukraine's war with Russia roiled around them, Khudia told Zavadska he felt calm and peaceful around her. He called her "my baby girl." She called him "my boy" ***PHOTO: PTI***

What should we know about power outage in Spain, Portugal

The sweeping power outage that hit Spain and Portugal this week has raised questions about the electricity grid in a region not normally known for blackouts.

Monday's outage, one of the worst ever in Europe, started in the afternoon and lasted through nightfall, affecting tens of millions of people across the Iberian Peninsula. It disrupted businesses, hospitals, transit systems, cellular networks and other critical infrastructure.

Authorities in Spain and Portugal are still investigating exactly what caused the failure, though some information has emerged about happened. Here's what to know:

Spain and Portugal lost most of their electricity early Monday afternoon.

Shortly after 12.30pm local time, Spain lost 15 gigawatts of electricity, roughly 60 per cent of demand in the country of 49 million, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said.

There had been two significant "disconnection events" — or interruptions in power — before the outage, Spain's electric grid operator Red Electrica de Espana said Tuesday.

While Spain's grid managed to recover from the first event, systems operations director Eduardo Prieto said that the second was more damaging, progressing to the point of interruptions from France's electrical system and producing "a massive, temporary disconnection."

About three hours before the outage, power quality sensors in homes in the Madrid area showed warning signs of an unstable grid — there were small fluctuations in voltage around 9.30am local time, Whisker Labs CEO Bob Marshall said Tuesday.

Instead of normal, steady voltage, Marshall said the data shows there were oscillations whose frequency and magnitude increased over the next three hours until the grid failed. He does not know what caused the instability.

Around noon, there was a big jump in the magnitude of the fluctuations, with the voltage measured going up and down by about 15 volts every 1.5 seconds, Marshall said.

"The way I would interpret our data," Marshall said about Monday's events, "is that the grid is struggling. Something's wrong. And it's showing increasing signs of instability." We don't know exactly what caused Monday's fluctuations and eventual failure.

Power outages can have several triggers, including natural disasters and extreme weather, human-caused disasters, equipment failures, overloading transformers and wires and so on.

About three hours before the outage, power quality sensors in homes in the Madrid area showed warning signs of an unstable grid ***PHOTO: PTI***

Electric grids are sensitive to imbalances in the amount of energy generated versus what's used.Authorities in Spain and Portugal have downplayed the idea that a cyberattack was responsible. Spain's High Court said it would investigate to find the cause.On Tuesday, there was renewed attention on Spain's renewable energy generation. Portugal also generates a majority of its energy from renewable sources.

Questions remain about whether Spain's heavy renewable energy supply may have made its grid system more susceptible to the type of outage that took place Monday. The thinking goes that non-renewable energy sources, such as coal and natural gas, can better weather the type of fluctuations observed Monday on Spain's grid.

That is because renewable energies like solar and wind provide intermittent supply, relying on when the sun is shinning and wind is blowing. However, in recent years batteries that store energy, along with other methods, have helped regulate changes in electricity supply from renewables.

Lannoye said it was too early to draw a straight line between Monday's event and Spain's solar power generation.

Europe's electric grid is highly connected, meaning that it can pool power between countries. That can make the system more resilient, experts say. It also means a disruption in a major transmission artery or frequency imbalance can trigger cascading protective shutdowns across countries, according to Shreenithi Lakshmi Narasimhan, member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. *—PTI*

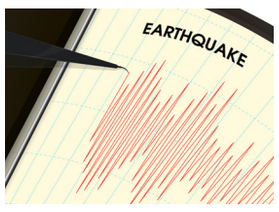


PHOTO: FREEPIK

No damage reported after 6.2 quake hits NZ

WELLINGTON, 30 APRIL

A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck off the west coast of New Zealand early on Wednesday, but no damage was reported and no tsunami warning was issued. The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the quake occurred shortly after 1am local time, about 300km southwest of Invercargill, at a depth of 10km beneath the sea. New Zealand's geological agency confirmed the tremor was not felt on land. Later, the USGS reported a separate 6.8-magnitude quake in the Macquarie Island region, more than 1,200km northeast of Invercargill, at a shallow depth of under five kilometres. New Zealand, home to five million people, lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a seismically active zone prone to frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity. *—PTI*

3 China astronauts get home after 6 months in space

BEIJING, 30 APRIL

Three Chinese astronauts, including China's third female astronaut Wang Haoze, safely returned to Earth on Wednesday after a 183-day mission aboard the Tiangong space station. The Shenzhou-19 return capsule, also carrying Cai Xuzhe and Song Lingdong, landed at Dongfeng in Inner Mongolia following a delay due to poor weather. Medical teams confirmed all were in good health. The crew had three spacewalks, including a record-breaking nine-hour outing on 17 December, 2024. They also completed experiments in microgravity, space materials, life sciences, and aerospace medicine. The astronauts launched in October 2024 and handed over control of the station to a new team. Tiangong is China's space station, developed after its exclusion from the ISS. *—PTI*

Centre-left party approves German coalition deal

BERLIN, 30 APRIL

Germany's centre-left Social Democrats have voted in favour of a coalition agreement, clearing the way for Friedrich Merz to become the country's next chancellor. The announcement was made on Wednesday, following prior approval of the deal by Merz's conservative Union bloc. Parliament is scheduled to convene on 6 May to elect Merz, who will need a majority in the Bundestag to succeed Olaf Scholz as Germany's 10th chancellor. The new coalition aims to boost economic growth, increase defence spending, adopt a firmer stance on migration, and advance long-overdue modernisation efforts. Merz's appointment could reshape Germany's domestic and international policies. *—PTI*

At least 10 killed in sectarian clashes near Damascus

DAMASCUS, 30 APRIL

Clashes erupted in the southern Damascus suburb of Jaramana on Tuesday, leaving at least 10 dead after Druze gunmen clashed with pro-government fighters. This followed circulation of an audio clip reportedly criticising Prophet Muhammad, which was attributed to a Druze cleric, Marwan Kiwan. Kiwan denied the accusation. Interior Ministry found that Kiwan was not responsible. Following the fighting, government representatives and local dignitaries reached an agreement to end hostilities, compensate victims' families, and hold perpetrators accountable. However, such agreements have failed in the past. Tensions between Druze community and government forces have been escalating as the minority group faces more unrest amid Syria's instability. *—PTI*

US ends legal status of int'l students

Students go into hiding fearing deportation; many visas revoked over traffic violations

WASHINGTON, 30 APRIL

The US government has begun shedding new light on a crackdown on international students, spelling out how it targeted thousands of people and laying out the grounds for terminating their legal status.

The new details emerged in lawsuits filed by some of the students who suddenly had their status cancelled in recent weeks with little explanation.

In the past month, foreign students around the US have been rattled to learn their records had been removed from a student database maintained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Some went into hiding for fear of being picked up by immigration authorities or abandoned their studies to return home.

On Friday, after mounting court challenges, federal officials said the government was restoring international students' legal status while it developed a framework to guide future terminations.

In a court filing on Monday, it shared the new policy – a document issued over the weekend with guidance on a range of reasons students' status can be cancelled, including the revocation of the visas they used to enter the US.

The new details emerged in lawsuits filed by some of the students who suddenly had their status cancelled in recent weeks with little explanation **PHOTO: PTI**

- Many of the students who had visas revoked or lost their legal status said they had only minor infractions on their record, including driving infractions. Some did not know why they were targeted at all

Brad Banias, an immigration attorney, said the new guidelines vastly expand ICE's authority beyond previous policy, which did not count visa revocation as grounds for losing legal status.

"This just gave them carte blanche to have the State Department revoke a visa and then deport those students even if they've done nothing wrong," Banias said.

Lawyers for the government provided some explanation at a hearing Tuesday in the case of Banias' client Akshar Patel, an international student studying information systems in Texas. Patel's status was terminated and then reinstated this month. *—PTI*

TRUMP JOKES HE'D LIKE TO BE POPE

US President Donald Trump has said jokingly he would be his own "number one choice" for the next pope. "I'd like to be pope. That would be my number one choice," Trump told a reporter. He was among the world leaders who attended Pope Francis' funeral at the St Peter's Square in the Vatican on 26 April. When asked who should replace Francis, Trump said, "I have no preference," but added: "I must say, we have a cardinal that happens to be out of a place called New York who's very good, so we'll see what happens." *—PTI*

IRAQI CHARGED OVER 2020 VOTE

An Iraqi man living in New York has been charged with illegally voting in the 2020 election, said US prosecutors, who said Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency assisted in the investigation. Akeel Abdul Jamiel, 45, was living in South Glens Falls, when he voted in Saratoga County "fully knowing he was not a US citizen," according to the charging document. He is charged with voting by aliens, a misdemeanour punishable by up to one year in prison *—PTI*

'HAITIAN GANGS ARE TERRORISTS'

The Trump administration has told Congress that it intends to designate Haitian gangs as foreign terrorist organisations, according to people familiar with the notification. The State Department had similarly labelled eight Latin American crime organisations as it ratcheted up pressure on cartels operating in the US and anyone assisting them, and the new move indicates that the administration plans to put similar pressure on gangs from Haiti. It carries with it sanctions and penalties for "material support" for the group. *—PTI*

N Korea test-fires missiles from its newly launched destroyer

SEOUL, 30 APRIL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has overseen the first test-firings of missiles from the country's newly launched 5,000-tonne destroyer, calling it a major step in strengthening the navy's nuclear strike capabilities.

The warship, unveiled last week at a ceremony in the western port of Nampo, is reportedly the North's first destroyer and features supersonic and strategic cruise missiles, anti-aircraft systems, automatic guns, and electronic jamming weapons.

Kim hailed the ship's construction as a breakthrough in naval modernisation and announced plans to deploy it early next year. He also outlined his ambition to acquire a nuclear-powered submarine, citing growing US-led hostility as justification for strengthening deterrence.

- The warship, unveiled last week at a ceremony in the western port of Nampo, is reportedly the North's first destroyer and features supersonic and strategic cruise missiles

Experts suggest the destroyer was likely built with Russian assistance. Analysis of images indicates its radar and anti-aircraft systems may originate from Russia. This development comes amid expanding military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow, with North Korea recently confirming the deployment of combat troops to aid Russia in Ukraine. In return, Russia is believed to be offering military and technological support.

While South Korea maintains naval superiority with 12 destroyers, analysts warn that the North Korean vessel, capable of carrying around 80 missiles, poses a serious threat. Its deployment could significantly bolster Pyongyang's air defence and maritime strike capabilities in the region, further heightening tensions on the Korean Peninsula. *—PTI*

This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it calls the test-firings, conducted on 28 and 29 April, of missiles from a newly launched destroyer 'Choe Hyon' in North Korea **PHOTO: PTI**

4,700 N Koreans died or were injured fighting for Russia

In this photo by Ukrainian Emergency Service, firefighters put out a fire after a Russian drone attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on **PHOTO: PTI**

SEOUL, 30 APRIL

An estimated 4,700 North Korean soldiers have been killed or wounded while fighting alongside Russia against Ukrainian forces, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers Wednesday.

The assessment came two days after North Korea confirmed for the first time that it had sent combat troops to help Russia recapture parts of the Kursk region, which it lost control of to a surprise Ukrainian incursion last year.

In a closed-door parliamentary committee briefing, South Korea's National Intelligence Service said North Korea had suffered 4,700 casualties, including 600 deaths, on the Russia-Ukraine battlefronts, according to Lee Seong Kweun, one of the lawmakers who attended the meeting.

Lee told reporters the NIS said that 2,000 injured North Korean soldiers were repatriated to North Korea by air or train between January and March. He cited the NIS as saying the dead North Korean soldiers were cremated in Russia before their remains were sent back home.

In January, the NIS said about 300 North Korean soldiers had died and another 2,700 had been injured, and the South Korean military increased the estimated casualties to 4,000 last month.

On Monday, North Korea announced that leader Kim Jong Un had decided to dispatch troops to "annihilate and wipe out the Ukrainian neo-Nazi occupiers and liberate the Kursk area in cooperation with the Russian armed forces."

Both Kim and Putin said the North Korean deployment was made under their countries' landmark 2024 defence treaty, which requires each side to provide aid if the other is attacked. *—PTI*

Olympics: France accuses Russia of cyber attack

PARIS, 30 APRIL

The French government accused a hacking group linked to Russian military intelligence of cyber attacks over three years, targeting the Paris Olympics, French government agencies and companies. A report by France's cybersecurity agency, ANSSI, outlined cyber incidents from 2021 through 2024, which it attributes to a group called APT28, also known as Fancy Bear. The report said the hacking aimed to collect intelligence, notably in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine. France is among Ukraine's most vocal backers, and its government is working to ensure that a US-brokered peace deal doesn't embolden Russia and threaten Europe's security. *—PTI*

HOLLYWOOD MOGUL'S DOWNFALL

First accuser testifies in Weinstein's MeToo retrial

NEW YORK, 30 APRIL

A woman who says Harvey Weinstein forcibly performed oral sex on her testified Tuesday at his MeToo retrial that she never had any romantic or sexual interest in the one-time Hollywood heavyweight.

Miriam Haley, the first of three accusers expected to testify, told jurors about an awkward meeting with Weinstein at the Cannes Film Festival in France two months before she says he assaulted her at his Manhattan apartment in July 2006.

The witness, reprising her testimony from his first trial in 2020, said she went to Weinstein's hotel room to speak about potential jobs in the movie and TV business, but he "quickly started talking about other things".

He commented on her legs and suggested they give each other massages, Haley said.

Now 47, she said she refused his advances and burst into tears as she left. "I felt taken aback. I felt humiliated," she testified. "It was just kind of like a sinking feeling that he wasn't taking me seriously at all."

Asked by Manhattan prosecutor Nicole Blumberg if she had "any interest whatsoever" in Weinstein, "romantically or sexually," Haley replied: "No, I did not. I was there to try and find work."

Haley's testimony is expected to continue on Wednesday. She has yet to be asked about the alleged assault.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who inherited the case from his predecessor, watched from the courtroom gallery as Haley took the stand. Her lawyer, Gloria Allred, sat behind Bragg. *—PTI*

Miriam Haley, the first of three accusers, said producer Harvey Weinstein (inset) forcibly performed oral sex on her **PHOTO: PTI**

Canada's Liberals fall short of majority in Parl

OTTAWA, 30 APRIL

Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberals secured a dramatic comeback victory in Canada's federal election but fell just three seats short of a parliamentary majority. The party won 169 of 343 seats, while the Conservatives took 144. The separatist Bloc Québécois gained 22 seats, the New Democrats seven, and the Greens one.

Carney's win, seen as a rejection of US President Donald Trump's hostile rhetoric and trade threats, marks a shift in Canadian sentiment. "America wants our land, our resources, our water, our country," Carney warned. "That will never... ever happen."

Turnout reached 68.5%, the highest since 1993. Many voters cited Trump's interference and tariffs as key concerns. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, once the frontrunner, lost both the election and his own seat. Known for his "Canada First" slogan, Poilievre was criticised for echoing Trump's populism.

The Liberals must now seek support from either the Bloc or the weakened New Democrats, whose leader Jagmeet Singh announced his resignation. Bloc leader Yves-François Blanchet signalled willingness to cooperate for a year to ensure stability. *—PTI*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Palestinians struggle in a crowd as they try to get food at a distribution centre in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Rupee jumps 38P to settle at 84.58 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 30 APRIL

The rupee surged 38 paise to 84.58 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday as trade-deal hopes and foreign fund inflows boosted investor sentiments. US President Donald Trump's statement that tariff talks with India are in a positive direction enthused investors, forex dealers said. However, geo-political tensions between India and Pakistan and a muted sentiment in domestic equities weighed on investor sentiments. At interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.15 and moved between the intra-day high of 84.47 and the low of 85.15 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 84.58 (provisional), registering a gain of 38 paise over its previous closing level. On Tuesday, rupee gained 27 paise to settle at 84.96 against the US dollar.—*PTI*

Crisil net profit grows 16% in March quater

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Crisil reported a 16 per cent rise in consolidated net profit for the first quarter of 2025, reaching Rs 159.84 crore, up from Rs 137.72 crore in the same period last year. The domestic rating agency posted a total income of Rs 843.77 crore, an increase from Rs 758.77 crore in Q1 2024. The company follows a January-December financial year. The board has recommended an interim dividend of Rs 8 per equity share of Rs 1 face value for the financial year ending 31 December, 2025 with payment set for 19 May, 2025. Crisil's shares were trading at Rs 4,427, reflecting a 0.80 per cent rise from the previous close on the Bombay Stock Exchange.—*PTI*

Zydus gets USFDA nod for cholesterol lowering drug

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Zydus Lifesciences Ltd has received final approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to produce a generic version of Niacin extended-release tablets. The tablets, available in strengths of 500 mg, 750 mg, and 1,000 mg, will be manufactured at the company's Moraiya facility in Ahmedabad.

Niacin is used to lower elevated cholesterol levels, including total cholesterol (TC), LDL cholesterol (LDL-C), apolipoprotein B (Apo B), and triglycerides (TG), while increasing HDL cholesterol (HDL-C). It also helps reduce the risk of recurrent heart attacks in patients with a history of myocardial infarction and hyperlipidaemia, as well as lowering triglycerides in those with severe hypertriglyceridemia.—*PTI*

IKEA to open compact stores in smaller cities

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

IKEA is shifting its growth strategy in India by introducing compact stores in smaller cities and urban locations. These stores, as small as 10,000 square feet, are designed for neighbourhood malls and high streets, making IKEA more accessible to a wider audience. The new stores will feature limited physical displays, with digital catalogues for customers to explore the full range of over 7,000 products. Various delivery options, including home delivery and collection points, will be available.

Initially, IKEA is focusing on six key cities—Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Chennai, and Pune—while also considering smaller tier II and III cities. The company aims to expand quickly and achieve profitable growth in India, with plans for further investment and new store formats.—*PTI*

India sees brisk gold buying on Akshaya Tritiya

Industry sees 35% value jump despite price surge

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Consumer footfalls were higher in South India during the first half of the day and were expected to increase in Maharashtra and northern states later due to extreme weather conditions *PHOTO: PTI*

Gold and silver buying in India -- the world's largest gold consumer -- kicked off positively on Wednesday's auspicious Akshaya Tritiya festival despite high prices, with jewellers' body GJC projecting gold sales to jump 35 per cent in value terms over the last year.

Consumer footfalls were higher in south India during the first half of the day and were expected to increase in Maharashtra and northern states later due to extreme weather conditions.

Gold prices are trading between Rs 99,500 and Rs 99,900 per 10g across different parts of the country, 37.6 per cent higher than Rs 72,300 on Akshaya Tritiya in 2024.

Consumers who had hesitated to buy gold at elevated prices are now purchasing as prices have stabilized from peak levels, All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council Chairman Rajesh Rokede told PTI. "We expect gold sale to remain steady at last year's level of 20 tonnes. However, in value terms, we see 35 per cent increase in gold sale today," he said. Buying precious metal on Akshaya Tritiya is a tradition widely followed in south India that has gradually spread across the country with increased awareness.

Rokede noted that even consumers aged 25-40 years are buying gold and silver, an emerging trend amid sharp rises in precious metal rates. Consumers are purchasing jewellery, coins, and bars based on necessity and budget.

All India Jewellers and Goldsmith Federation President Pankaj Arora projected sales of about 12 tonnes of gold worth nearly Rs 12,000 crore and about 400 tonnes of silver worth Rs 4,000 crore, totalling an estimated Rs 16,000 crore in business.

Experts said gold demand has not declined in last three years despite the yellow metal reaching new peaks. —*PTI*

GOLD PRICES DECLINE BY RS 900

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Gold prices declined by Rs 900 to Rs 98,550 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday amid a weak trend in international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 99,450 per 10g on Tuesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 900 to Rs 98,100 per 10g from the previous close of Rs 99,000 per 10g.

Gold prices ruled at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams on Akshaya Tritiya in 2024 which fell on May 10

In the overseas market, spot gold dipped USD 43.35 or 1.31 per cent to USD 3,273.90 per ounce. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

Amul
The Taste of India

Mother Dairy, Amul up milk price by Rs 2/L

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Milk supplier Mother Dairy and Amul milk has increased prices by Rs 2 per litre in all markets.

Mother Dairy sells around 35 lakh litre of milk per day in Delhi-NCR market through its own outlets, general trade and e-commerce platforms. It also has presence in other states including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Bihar.

Mother Dairy argued that it was compelled to increase milk prices for consumers because of the rise in procurement costs of milk from dairy farmers.

The surge in procurement costs is mainly due to early onset of summer and heatwave conditions, the official said. This revision represents only a partial pass-through of the increased costs, aiming to equitably serve the interests of both farmers and consumers, the official added.

In Delhi-NCR, the prices of toned milk have increased to Rs 56 per litre from Rs 54 per litre earlier. Rates of full-cream milk and toned milk have been increased by Rs 1 per litre to Rs 69 per litre and Rs 57 per litre.

Double-toned milk has become costlier by Rs 2 per litre to Rs 51 per litre. The prices of cow milk has been increased to Rs 59 per litre from Rs 57 per litre.

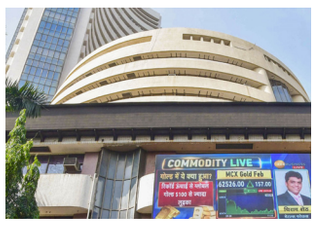
Amul milk across variants in the country will be raised by Rs 2 per litre with effect from 1 May, the marketing federation which owns the dairy brand announced on Wednesday citing an increase in input costs in production of the commodity.

The increase of Rs 2 per litre translates into a range of 3-4 per cent hike in maximum retail price which is much lower than average food inflation, the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation said in a release. The federation pointed out it has not increased prices of fresh pouch milk since June 2024.

Following the hike, a 500ml pouch of Amul Gold milk will be available for Rs 34, while one litre pouch of the same brand will cost Rs 67 from Thursday in Gujarat, it said. —*PTI*

Mkts settle flat amid selling in Bajaj twins

MUMBAI, 30 APRIL



Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty stayed range-bound for the second consecutive session and ended flat on Wednesday in a highly volatile trade amid escalated geo-political tensions and selling in Bajaj twins.

Sustained foreign fund inflows, however, restricted the markets decline.

The 30-share BSE benchmark gauge declined 46.14 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 80,242.24. During the day, it hit a high of 80,525.61 and a low of 79,879.15, gyrating 646.46 points.

The NSE Nifty ended marginally lower by 1.75 points or 0.01 per cent at 24,334.20.

From the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv dropped over 5 per cent, while Bajaj Finance tanked almost 5 per cent each.

Bajaj Finserv Ltd (BFL) on Tuesday reported a 14 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,417 crore in ourth quarter ended March 2025.

Meanwhile, NBFC firm Bajaj Finance on Tuesday reported a 16 per cent rise in standalone net profit to Rs 3,940 crore in the March 2025 quarter.

Tata Motors, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Steel and Asian Paints were among the other laggards from the 30-share pack.

Maruti, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Hindustan Unilever and HDFC Bank were among the gainers. The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 1.74 per cent and midcap index declined by 0.72 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, industrials dropped 1.20 per cent, services, commodities, power, utilitiesand financial services. Telecommunication, auto, realty and teck were the gainers.

Equity markets will remain closed on Thursday for 'Maharashtra Day'. — *PTI*

GENSOL DOWN FOR 15TH STRAIGHT DAY

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Shares of crisis-hit Gensol Engineering continued to slide on Wednesday, declining 5 per cent, to hit another lower circuit limit.

The stock tumbled 4.99 per cent to Rs 78.10 -- its lowest trading permissible limit for the day as also a 52-week low -- on the BSE.

Shares of the firm slumped 5 per cent to hit the lower circuit as well as a 52-week low level of Rs 77.29 at the NSE.

The stock witnessed a decline for the 15th straight day on Wednesday.

During this time, the stock has lost over 52 per cent.

Shares of the firm have dropped 93 per cent from the 52-week high of Rs 1,125.75. —*PTI*

Restaurants can employ 1.5 cr people by 2028: NRAI

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India's restaurant sector has the potential to provide employment to 1.5 crore people by 2028, from 85 lakh at present, provided it gets the "right impetus" from the government including an 'industry' status and benefit of input tax credit on GST, National Restaurant Association of India's (NRAI) Vice President Zorawar Kalra said on Wednesday.

The NRAI claims to represent five lakh restaurants across the country. The association has been at loggerheads with food delivery aggregators like Swiggy and Zomato primarily over the aggregators' foray into the quick-commerce space with their own private-label brands, arguing this move undermines fair competition and harms independent restaurants.

"We don't have a separate industry status, that would be a big positive move, as it would give us a voice," Kalra said.

The NRAI Vice President, who is also the Founder and Managing Director of Massive Restaurants Pvt. Ltd, described the lack of input tax credit on GST as a "major issue" faced by the country's restaurant industry, expressing hope that the issue will be taken up as the Association was in talks with the "right people".

Under the prevailing Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework, restaurants fall under the 5 per cent GST rate, with no option to claim input tax credit (ITC) or the 18 per cent GST rate, with ITC claims. —*PTI*

PSX plunges 3.5 pts amid showdown

ISLAMABAD, 30 APRIL

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) plunged by more than 3,500 points on Wednesday as uncertainty took hold due to increasing risk of a showdown with India.

Information Minister Atta Tarar said that India was planning military action against Pakistan in 26 to 36 hours, spreading panic in the market.

The market maintained a downward trend throughout the day and finally the index closed at 111,326.57, down by 3,545.61 or 3.09 per cent, from the last close of 114,872.18, according to the data provided by the PSX.

Analysts attributed the plunge to the uncertain security situation after the Pahalgam terrorist attack of April 22 that killed at least 26 people. —*PTI*

Bengaluru sees 59% rise in luxury home sales

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

PHOTO: XXX

Bengaluru's housing market witnessed a 59 per cent growth in sales of luxury homes, costing Rs 10 crore and above, in the last fiscal at a record Rs 1,000 crore on high demand, according to India Sotheby's International Realty and CRE Matrix report.

Real estate consultant India Sotheby's International Realty (ISIR) and real estate data analytics firm CRE Matrix's recent report mentioned that Bengaluru's luxury housing market (Rs 10 crore and above) achieved sale bookings of Rs 1,000 crore in 2024-25 against Rs 627 crore in the preceding year. The report stated that Rs 10-12 crore ticket-size apartments are seeing the highest sales in Bengaluru's luxury segment.

"Bengaluru's luxury housing market has entered a new league. We're seeing discerning buyers - especially CXOs, startup founders, and global Indians - investing not just in a home, but in a lifestyle. The demand today is driven as much by aspiration as by strategic asset allocation," ISIR CEO Ashwin Chadha said. —*PTI*

Panel to oversee operations of IndusInd Bank

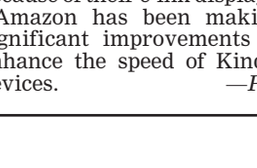
NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

IndusInd Bank on Wednesday said its board has appointed a 'committee of executives' to oversee the operations of the bank following resignation of CEO Sumant Kathpalia.

Kathpalia resigned from services of the bank with effect from 29 April, 2025, taking moral responsibility of accounting lapses in the derivatives portfolio having financial implication of Rs 1,960 crore.

"The Board has constituted such "Committee of Executives" to oversee the operations of the bank, under the oversight and guidance of the Oversight Committee of the Board till a new MD&CEO... assumes charge or a period of 3 months," IndusInd Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The oversight committee shall be chaired by the chairman of the board and shall comprise the chairs of Audit Committee, the Compensation and Nomination & Remuneration Committee and the Risk Management Committee, as members, it said. —*PTI*



NEW COMPETITOR

Meta launches AI app build with Llama 4

CALIFORNIA, 30 APRIL

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Working to differentiate itself in the crowded field of artificial intelligence, Meta Platforms has launched a standalone AI app — with a social media component — to compete with OpenAI's ChatGPT.

The Meta AI app, built with the company's Llama 4 AI system. It includes a "discover" feed that lets users see how others are interacting with AI. It also has a voice mode for interacting with the AI.

"It's smart for Meta to differentiate its ChatGPT competitor by drawing from the company's social media roots. The app's Discover feed is like a version of the OG Facebook Feed but only focused on AI use cases," said Forrester research director Mike Proulx.

By letting users link their Facebook and Instagram accounts, the Meta AI app "gets a leg up on instantly personalising its user experience with social media context."

Meta has taken a different approach to AI than many of its rivals, releasing it for free as an open-source product. The company says more than a billion people use its AI products each month.

At the Menlo Park, California-based tech giant's inaugural conference, LlamaCon, on Tuesday Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg chatted with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in a technical discussion around the speed of AI development and how the technology is shifting both their companies — where AI is already writing code — as well as the world.

- The Meta AI app, includes a "discover" feed that lets users see how others are interacting with AI. It also has a voice mode for interacting with the AI.

Acknowledging there is a lot of "hype" around AI, Zuckerberg said "if this is going to lead to massive increases in productivity, that needs to be reflected in major increases in GDP." —*PTI*

New Kindle Paperwhite costs Rs 16,999 in India

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Amazon will launch a new Kindle Paperwhite in India at a price of Rs 16,999.

The new Kindle Paperwhite is Amazon's fastest so far, with page turning faster by 25 per cent. It has a battery life of 12 weeks.

Amazon also claims it to be the thinnest Paperwhite that accommodates its seven inch display in a sleek frame.

The device also accompanies new covers in black, marine green, and tulip pink that are priced at Rs 1,999.

"We're excited to launch the all-new Kindle Paperwhite with upgraded features that our customers will value," said Dilip RS, director and country manager of Amazon Devices India.

The display comes with high 300 ppi resolution, is waterproof and has a fairly slim bezels and an oxide thin-film transistor to render the texts and illustrations clearer.

The device has a 16GB storage and USB-C charging port.

Kindle screens are glare free because of their e-ink displays.

Amazon has been making significant improvements to enhance the speed of Kindle devices. —*PTI*

India football to face Thailand for friendlies in June

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The Indian men's football team will face Thailand in an international friendly on 4 June, at Thammasat Stadium, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said. This match is part of India's preparation for their AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers Final Round, with a key qualifier against Hong Kong-China scheduled for 10 June. Currently ranked 127th in the FIFA rankings, India will face 99th-ranked Thailand, with the teams having met 26 times previously. India has won seven encounters, while Thailand has triumphed 12 times. India's training camp will start in Kolkata on 18 May, and the team will travel to Thailand by 29 May. Following the friendly, they will head to Hong Kong to prepare. —*PTI*

England eye Tim Southee as fast bowling consultant

LONDON, 30 APRIL

England are reportedly considering former New Zealand pacer Tim Southee as their fast-bowling consultant ahead of a summer featuring a five-Test series against India. The 36-year-old is one of the candidates to replace veteran paceman James Anderson, who took on the role after retiring from Test cricket last year will be unavailable this summer due to county commitments with Lancashire. Southee, who called time on his red-ball career in December, finished with 391 Test wickets. According to the BBC, Southee shares a strong rapport with England head coach Brendon McCullum. Alongside McCullum, former New Zealand spinner Jeetan Patel is also part of the coaching staff. —*PTI*

Advani, Razmi continue dominance in CCI

MUMBAI, 30 APRIL

Pankaj Advani and Shayan Razmi continued their winning streak at the CCI Billiards Classic on Wednesday, triumphing over Ashok Shandilya and Martin Goodwill, respectively, in their group stage matches. Advani produced breaks of 189 and 109 to secure a dominant 777-387 victory against Shandilya. Meanwhile, Razmi narrowly defeated Great Britain's Goodwill 409-403. Razmi later beat Rafath Habib 516-380, maintaining his perfect record. In other matches, Nalin Patel claimed his second win, overcoming Akshay Gogri 750-278, while Gogri also lost to Siddharth Parikh 799-230 while Dhvaj Haria dominated Amit Sapru. —*PTI*

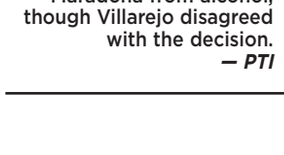


PHOTO: X

'Maradona was eating hamburgers after surgery'

BUENOS AIRES, 30 APRIL

Diego Maradona was allowed to order unhealthy food including hamburgers during recovery from surgery, the director of the clinic's intensive care unit testified at the the trial of seven health professionals charged with negligence in the soccer star's death. Fernando Villarejo, who worked in the clinic's intensive care unit, said he felt like a pawn between Maradona's neurosurgeon, Leopoldo Luque, and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, who determined his care. Villarejo claimed Maradona had surgery without preoperative tests, and several days later, Luque ordered sedation to detoxify Maradona from alcohol, though Villarejo disagreed with the decision. — *PTI*

REVITALISED ROYALS LOOK TO HALT UNSTOPPABLE MI

Emerging Suryavanshi to contest returning Bumrah

JAIPUR, 30 APRIL

Rajasthan Royals will turn up against Mumbai Indians with renewed vigour as they aim to halt the five-time champions' surging momentum in the Indian Premier League on Thursday.

With 14-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi playing potentially the knock of the tournament on Monday, the Royals have found a ray of hope in what has been an IPL campaign of missed opportunities.

A side strain to skipper Sanju Samson paved the way of Suryavanshi's debut and it only took him three innings to become the talking point of the cricketing world.

Samson last played on 16 April and there is no clarity over his comeback, leaving Suravanshi and Yashasvi Jaiswal to open the innings again. Their 166-run stand against Gujarat Titans ensured they made short work of the 210-run target.

Many are looking forward to returning Mumbai spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's matchup against Suryavanshi.

Lower down the order, there will be pressure on Shimron Hetmyer who has not been at his ballistic best. After all, what will probably make the difference in their ordinary run is their inability to close games out.

With 14-year old Vaibhav Suryavanshi playing potentially the knock of the tournament, Rajasthan have found a new hope to challenge the re-surging Mumbai Indians **PHOTO: PTI**

In the pace department, Jofra Archer has provided the breakthroughs but has conceded close to 10 runs per over. In fact, none of their frontline bowlers have an economy rate of less than 9.

Hardik Pandya-led Mumbai Indians' meanwhile, looks unstoppable. The perennial slow starters have now collected five wins on the bounce, and sit prettily at the second position on the points table.

With likes of Suryakumar Yadav and Rohit Sharma back at their best, MI seem to be peaking at the right time, an ominous sign for the opposition teams.

The hosts still have a mathematical chance of making the play-offs, so it remains to be seen if their talent can swing luck onto their side. —*PTI*

MI VS RR

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	30
RCB Won:	15
RR Won:	14
NO RESULT	1

MI vs RR Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Superbet Rapid and Blitz: Prag bounces back to jump to 2nd spot

WARSAW, 30 APR

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa bounced back from a poor start to climb to second in the overall standings at the end of the first half of the blitz section in the Superbet Rapid and Blitz tournament, part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Praggnanandhaa's efforts held him in good stead for a second day running. He had not done well on the first two days of rapid chess but has come back strongly.

With just five minutes given for each game and a three seconds increment after every move, Praggnanandhaa played his usual brand of complicated games and ended with three straight wins.

He had started with losses to Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania and Levon Aronian of United States but then recovered to beat Firouzja Alireza of France and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

In the last three rounds, Praggnanandhaa put it across former world champion Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria, Aravindh and David Gavrilescu of Romania to collect score 5.5 points out of allotted nine games.

Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia currently leads the pack.

Indian GM Aravindh Chithambaram ran a bit out of steam and only garnered 3.5 points from his nine games, to finish third.

Aravindh began with 2.5 points from first four games and then could only get one point from the last five. He will have to fight hard in the second half in order to finish a brilliant start– tying for first in the rapid section. —*PTI*

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa beat France's Firouzja Alireza after a tough start at the blitz section **PHOTO: X**

Novak Djokovic **PHOTO: PTI**

Djokovic pulls out of Italian Open

ROME, 30 APRIL

Novak Djokovic pulled out of the Italian Open in the midst of a three-match losing streak, shedding doubt on how well he'll be able to play at the upcoming French Open as he continues to seek a record 25th Grand Slam trophy and 100th tournament title overall. The clay-court event in Rome, which will be held next month, posted on social media that Djokovic wouldn't be participating and wrote: "See you next year, Nole," Djokovic has struggled this season, going just 12-6 and dropping his past three contests in a row — at the Miami Open, the Monte Carlos Masters and, on Saturday, at the Madrid Open. —PTI

Swiatek, Sabalenka enter Madrid quarterfinals

MADRID, 30 APRIL

Power was restored at the Caja Magica tennis complex and the Madrid Open resumed with a packed schedule that included second-ranked Iga Swiatek advancing to the quarterfinals after a "more relaxed" day because of the blackout.

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka made into the last eight by defeating Peyton Stearns in straight sets, while on the men's side, top-seeded Alexander Zverev was upset by 21st-ranked Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina.

Following the major blackout that prompted 22 matches to be postponed on Monday, Swiatek returned to the center court and defeated Diana Shnaider 6-0, 6-7 (3), 6-4 to stay on track to defend her title in the Spanish capital.

"I liked yesterday. I think the whole world was just more relaxed, kind of, obviously the people who didn't lose because of this," she said. "I enjoyed the time off, and I tried to just recover, because we need to savor these free days, for sure." —*PTI*

Iga Swiatek **PHOTO: PTI**

Indian hockey aims to fix team against Australia

PERTH, 30 APRIL

The Indian women's hockey team is set to field its 'best combinations' in the upcoming three-match Test series against Australia, beginning on Thursday. Head coach Harendra Singh aims to address defensive weaknesses and identify his core squad for the FIH Pro League matches in June. After losing the first two games to the Australia A side, India is keen to bounce back with a stronger performance.

"In the first two matches, most players got a chance to play, and now we'll test the best combinations," said Harendra Singh. "This will help identify players for the Pro League in Europe." He also highlighted the importance of giving new players at least 35 international matches before the World Cup next year.

Despite losing 3-5 and 2-3 in the opening matches, the coach was positive, noting, "We conceded some soft goals, but the team was competitive. This series is about gaining experience." Singh stressed the importance of exposing youngsters to international competition. India's 26-player squad, led by Salima Tete and vice-captain Navneet Kaur, will now face Australia's senior team in the next three matches. Singh singled out Mahima Tete for her potential and praised the team's competitive spirit. —*PTI*

ATLAS RESURGENT

Donnarumma saves PSG again

LONDON, 30 APRIL

Gianluigi Donnarumma was hailed as a "titan" by Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique after producing some brilliant saves against Arsenal to ensure his team took a lead into the second leg of their Champions League semifinal next week.

The Italy goalkeeper continued his impressive form in the knockout stage by pulling off two one-handed stops low down to his left, first to deny Gabriel Martinelli and then Leandro Trossard, and preserve PSG's clean sheet in a 1-0 win Tuesday.

Previously this campaign, Donnarumma was PSG's star in a last-16 win over Liverpool with two saves in a penalty shootout at Anfield, while a series of great saves in the second half of the second leg against Aston Villa allowed the French champion to squeeze through the quarterfinals.

Luis Enrique rarely veers away from his praise for the collective but the Spanish coach let that mantra slip a touch after the Arsenal game.

"I really want to underline the work of 14 or 15 players," he said. "...Obviously there were some players that shone a bit more than others and when you're playing away against a team that's so good at set pieces, you need a titan in goal." —*PTI*

Gianluigi Donnarumma **PHOTO: X**

BOURNEMOUTH'S EVANILSON 3-MATCH BAN OVERTURNED

London, 30 April

Bournemouth striker Evanilson's three-match ban was overturned on Wednesday following his red card against Manchester United in the Premier League. The suspension was removed after a successful claim of wrongful dismissal by Bournemouth, with Evanilson appearing to slip before taking out Mazraoui. Evanilson will now be available to face Arsenal on Saturday, as well as for games against Aston Villa and Manchester City. The Brazilian was dismissed in the 70th minute of the 1-1 draw with United at the Vitality Stadium on Sunday following a challenge on Noussair Mazraoui. —*PTI*

Firmino, Toney score as Al-Ahli reaches ACL final

Roberto Firmino, Ivan Toney and Firas Al-Buraikan scored as Al-Hilal reached their first final since 2012 **PHOTO: PTI**

JEDDAH, 30 APRIL

Roberto Firmino and Ivan Toney scored as Al-Ahli beat Al-Hilal 3-1 to reach the final of the Asian Champions League. The all-Saudi Arabian semifinal was played at King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Al-Ahli's home city.

Al-Ahli will take on the winner of Wednesday's clash between Al-Nassr, also of Saudi Arabia, and Japan's Kawasaki Frontale in Sunday's final.

It took just nine minutes for Al-Ahli to open the scoring as Firmino shot home from inside the area.

Just before the half-hour, ex-Manchester City forward Riyad Mahrez set up Toney for the England striker to make it 2-0.

Al-Hilal hit back after 42 minutes as Saudi Arabian international Salem Al-Dawsari scored his 10th goal of the tournament.

In stoppage time Firas Al-Buraikan made it 3-1 to seal a famous win for Al-Ahli and a first final appearance since 2012. —*PTI*

MONUMENTAL LOSS

Former national shooting coach Sunny Thomas dies at 84

KOCHI, 30 APRIL

Former India shooting coach Sunny Thomas, under whose tutelage the sport achieved some historic highs including multiple Olympic medals, died on Wednesday after suffering a cardiac arrest.

Sunny, 84, breathed his last in Kottayam. He is survived by his wife KJ Josamma, sons Manoj Sunny and Sanil Sunny and daughter Sonia Sunny.

The former shooter, who guided the Indian marksmen from 1993 to 2012, was a witness to several momentous occasions in the sport's history.

Honoured with the Dronacharya award in 2001, he was part of the coaching staff during the 2004 Athens Olympics where Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore became the first Indian to win a silver medal in shooting.

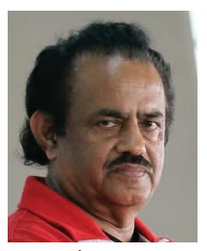
But the highest point in his career arrived in Beijing when Abhinav Bindra became the first Indian to win the gold medal in the air rifle event.

Thomas also oversaw the rise of eminent shooters like Vijay Kumar, Jaspal Rana, Samaresh Jung and Gagan Narang.

He also brought together pistol, rifle and shotgun teams under one umbrella for the ease of coaching.

Thomas, who started his career as an English lecturer at the Uzhavoor St Stephen's College in Kottayam in Kerala, was a national and state champion in the 1970s.

Later, Thomas started a shooting range at the Idukki Rifle Association, Kottayam, to popularise the discipline. —*PTI*



Sunny Thomas **PHOTO: X**

BANGLADESH TO TOUR PAKISTAN FOR T20IS IN MAY

KARACHI, 30 APRIL

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday confirmed that Bangladesh will travel to the country next month for a five-match T20I series where Faisalabad will host international matches after a long gap of 17 years.

The scheduled white-ball series, which is part of the Future Tour Programme (FTP) originally consisted of three ODIs and three T20Is.

The PCB said that with the ICC men's T20 World Cup scheduled for next year, both the Boards mutually agreed to replace the ODIs with two additional T20Is.

The five-match T20I series will be played in Faisalabad and Lahore from 25 May to 3 June. —*PTI*